THE EXTENSION HORTICULTURIST

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Many a good farmer is spoiled in the making because he sees little in farm life except hard work and poor pay. Through club work farm boys are learning how farming can be made profitable and farm life attractive.

What is your department doing to assist the club movement in your state ?

Office of Horticultural and Pomological Investigations
U. S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D. C.

Club work in some form is being promoted in practically every state as a means of getting the boys and girls interested in farm life. In a few states horticultural club work is under way and has served to broaden the scope of club activities. In this number of The Extension Horticulturist we give a general plan for orchard club work together with the methods now being followed in a few of the states.

Theoretically club work should begin with the propagation and rearing of plants to maturity. This, however, would not be practicable with standard fruits on account of the number of years involved. The only practicable basis upon which to establish orchard club work is by the use of bearing trees or those that are practically ready to begin bearing. After two or three years of work with bearing trees, many of the boys will doubtless take up the work of planting orchards for themselves. In most sections club work has been established in connection with neglected home orchards or where these are not available, a portion of a commercial orchard that has been more or less neglected has been used. Plans are now under way to include in the club work many of the small fruits and berries. This in fact has already been accomplished in the girls' clubs in connection with grape growing in the southern states.

General Plan of Apple Clubs

Membership in the club is to include boys who can secure the use of bearing trees and whose other duties will permit their carrying through the club work at the proper time. It is essential that the club work fit into the general plan of farm work. Otherwise the club member might not be able to carry through the work on time. For example, pruning and dormant spraying can be done before the rush of general farm work begins. The spraying for coddling moth and blotch where necessary, would have to be provided for during the busy season. Gathering the fruit, however, will as a rule not come until the rush of summer farm work is over. Varieties of fruit such as Early Harvest, Red Astrachan and Yellow Transparent, that mature early, might have to be neglected on account of hay harvesting. The fall and winter varieties are better adapted to club work. Six to twenty (usually 6 to 10) trees are allotted to each club member. In some cases a part or the whole of the home orchard is used. Where a suitable home orchard is not available, a portion of a neglected commercial orchard is sometimes used. Compensation for the use of the trees is handled either on a cash rental basis of so much per tree or one-fourth to one-half of the fruit is given the owner of the orchard at picking time.

The program of work for any club should begin with the organization of the club in January and the assignment of the trees. This should be done in December in the southern states. The plan for the actual work will depend upon the condition of the trees but as a rule

the pruning and dormant spraying will be done during February and the early part of March. Where the orchard has been badly neglected there will undoubtedly be a certain amount of cleaning up of the ground. This, however, will depend somewhat on whether the orchard has been kept in cultivation or not. The further plan of work will depend upon locality but at any rate the plan should be definitely settled in advance and the work carried out as nearly on time as weather and other conditions will permit.

The greatest difficulty is usually experienced in the application of the petal drop spray and in the application of subsequent sprayings for coddling moth, scab, blotch, etc. Spraying can best be done after a rain and before the land is dry enough for the cultivation of ordinary farm crops. In some cases each club member is provided with a barrel sprayer but more often a sprayer is used by several members or even by the entire club. In a few cases dealers have loaned or donated a good barrel sprayer for the use of the club.

In order to hold the interest of the members it has been found advisable to give the orchard club work a certain amount of publicity. In some cases signs are posted on each demonstration orchard, being so displayed as to call attention to the work that is being done. Publicity in the local newspapers is also of help.

At the time the fruit is ready for gathering the leader should be on hand to demonstrate to the club members proper methods of gathering, grading and packing the fruit.

How Clubs Are Being Conducted

Warren County, New Jersey, serves to illustrate the method of conducting orchard club work in that state. This county is located in the northwestern part of the state adjoining Pennsylvania and is in the commercial apple producing belt. There are three boys' apple clubs in this county. Mr. C. H. Reagle, acting county club leader and a graduate of Rutgers College, is in charge of the work. Mr. Reagle receives the advice and assistance of Mr. F. R. French who is assistant extension pomologist of the college. The three clubs are located at Hackettstown, Washington and Belvidere. There are from six to nine boys in each club, each boy caring for 6 to 10 bearing trees. Under agreement with the fathers or owners of the orchards, the boys will pay at the rate of $1.00 per tree per year or give the owner 25 per cent of the crop when it is gathered. Each club is provided with a barrel spray outfit. Contrary to the usual custom, the county agent is not responsible for the apple club work, this responsibility falling upon the county wide committee of the farm bureau. The work was started during the late winter with pruning and dormant spraying. Seasonal sprayings are being given during the summer months. Later instruction will be given the boys on the proper methods of grading and marketing.

In Massachusetts, Assistant state club leader Howe has started the organization of several small fruit clubs. Projects have been drawn covering raspberries, strawberries and grapes. These projects cover the preparation of the soil, drainage, securing of planting stock, varieties, in addition to the planting and care for the first season. This work has not progressed far enough to show results but looks like a move in the right direction.

In the southern states, especially on the Atlantic seaboard, fruit clubs have for a number of years been an important part of the home demonstration and girls' club work. Recently special attention has been given to the formation of grape clubs, using the native muscadine varieties, of which there are a number of improved sorts. This work is organized in connection with the regular club work. Only those club members who have completed two or three years of the garden club work are enrolled in the perennial or advanced work. The report for the season of 1919 shows that there were 1,839 members in these advanced clubs, that there had been planted 34,788 grape vines of the muscadine type, and that last year 19,495 gallons of grape juice was produced in addition to 34,561 quarts of other products. Recently three of the largest southern railroads have added these products to the menus on their dining cars and the demand has been greater than the supply. Assistance has been given the club leaders by the state horticultural forces. One result of this work is the interest taken by the mothers of the girls over 2,000 of whom have undertaken similar work under the leadership of the home demonstration agents. The horticultural club work of the southern states includes, in addition to the muscadine grapes, such small fruits as are adapted to the climate.

Indiana Boys' Fruit Clubs

At Veedersburg, Indiana, the senior boys of the Fountain County Vocational Agricultural High School comprise an apple club, having charge of an orchard of 50 trees from 30 to 50 years old. In order to make the demonstration complete, check trees were left. A visit to the orchard by Prof. Close in August showed the fruit to be in good shape with very little leaf blotch or scab on the treated portion. The check trees, however, were badly blotched and scabbed and many of the apples were wormy. The orchard is not cultivated but mulched with straw. Under the arrangement the owner gets one-third of the fruit, the school getting two-thirds and doing all the work. There were 14 boys in the club last season. As a result of the training given these boys, they have been employed during their spare time in pruning the fruit trees in the neighborhood.

Boys' apple club work has been established in Iowa. At Rockwell City there is a club of five members. These boys are considerably scattered as to location. One orchard visited by Prof. Close consisted of 50 trees which were being sprayed by means of a

barrel sprayer. The club member in addition to spraying his own trees had undertaken to spray other trees in the neighborhood. The boys of this club are about 16 years of age, have been well instructed and are making a great success of their orchard club work. Some of the boys belong to the baby beef club and other club activities.

In several of the fruit growing states the boys' apple club movement is being considered as a means not only of interesting the boys in fruit culture but also of saving the home orchards which in many cases have been badly neglected. While the work has not been universally adopted and good examples of results are wanting, there is reason to believe that this line of club work is going to prove quite popular, especially where it can be developed with bearing trees as a working basis. Where such are not available, the small fruit clubs will undoubtedly prove popular.

Fruits and Areas Adapted for Club Work.

Raspberries: One-fourth to one acre on one-fourth acre unit basis. Variety or varieties adapted to region to be grown. Cuthbert and St. Regis are considered best of the reds. St. Regis, sometimes called everbearing, frequently gives a good fall crop. Raspberries are only adapted to certain regions.

Strawberries: One-fourth acre units. Adapted to a wide range of territory. Klondike is a leading variety for the South. There are a number of good varieties for the North. Everbearing varieties are coming into favor for home use but the standard varieties are better adapted for club work.

Grapes: A good crop for club activities where the work can be carried through a period of five or six years. The Thomas variety is being extensively used for club planting in the South. Moore's Early, Niagara, Concord and Worden are prominent among varieties for the northern states. Five to twenty vines dependent upon variety and locality are suggested as a club unit.

Peaches: 25 to 100 trees, one-fourth to one acre. Are adapted to long period club work in territory where peaches are a reasonably sure crop. The problem of a market for peaches should be solved before selecting the peach for club activities.

Cherries: Are also adapted for long period club work in sections in which this fruit thrives. A rather unique idea is to plant cherry trees along the roadsides, outside of the fences. The trees need protection by means of boxes or wire netting for a year or two. This plan is suited only to sections having a rigid stock law. This plan might well be followed in club practice.

During the month of June, Mr. Beattie visited the workers of New York, New Jersey, Rhode Island and Massachusetts. As this is being written Prof. Close is completing a trip through Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Michigan. A report of Prof. Close's trip will be given in a later number.

Among those calling at the office this week are Mr. F. E. Miller who is in charge of the truck investigation work at the PeeDee Substation near Florence, South Carolina. Mr. Miller reports dry weather for the South Atlantic Coast section until about ten days ago. Since that time there has been an abundance of rain with a serious growth of weeds in the crops. Truckers of this section have been unusually successful with their early Irish potato crop. One grower reported an average yield of 48 barrels to the acre on 250 acres. These brought a minimum of $11 per barrel for No. 1 and $7 per barrel for No. 2, the percentage of No. 2 running extremely low. According to Mr. Miller's report truckers of the South Atlantic Coast section have made money this year despite the high prices of fertilizers, seed potatoes and labor.

Mr. Beattie reports crop conditions in New Jersey, Massachusetts and Rhode Island as fair. Continued rains have made it almost impossible for the growers to keep the crops free from weeds and the season is about two weeks late. There is still a considerable shortage of labor on the truck farms of this section. However, with the closing of the public schools thousands of boys are flocking to the truck farms and no further labor shortage is anticipated.

Prof. H. F. Tompson, in charge of the vegetable work in Massachusetts, is obtaining splendid results from the manure economy demonstrations being conducted at the truck station near Arlington, Mass. These demonstrations combine the use of manure, commercial fertilizers and soil improvement crops. The contrast between the plots is very striking and apparent from the time the plants appear until the harvest of the crop. Several of the more important market vegetables are being used to indicate these results.

Prof. Tompson, in cooperation with the Boston Market Gardeners' Association, is endeavoring to secure the adoption of the standard bushel box instead of the oversize box that has been used so many years in the Boston district. The oversize box places the local grower at a disadvantage in that he is giving more than a bushel in competition with standard or undersize boxes coming from outside sources. The movement is being bitterly opposed by the dealers as can be readily understood. This is another illustration of the desirability of promoting the use of standard containers throughout the country.

In New York State, Mr.R. M. Adams is doing an exceptionally good piece of work in the preparation of demonstration plans to be used by club demonstration teams at fairs and special meetings throughout the state. These teams consist of three club members, one of whom does most of the talking while the others conduct the demonstrations. Sample copies of these demonstration plans can be secured by addressing either Mr. Adams at Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y. or this office.

Announcement has just been made of the appointment of Dr. C. G. Woodbury, director of Purdue University Agricultural Experiment Station at Lafayette, Indiana, to the position as head of the bureau of conservation of raw products recently established by the National Canners Association. Dr. Woodbury has for many years been identified with horticultural experimental work and has been in close touch with work with truck crops and fruit growing. His work during recent years has brought him in contact with farm problems and he is exceptionally well prepared to undertake the duties of his new office. Dr. Woodbury's headquarters will be in Washington, D. C. where the National Canners Association laboratories are located.

Prof. Roy E. Marshall, extension horticulturist at Blacksburg, Virginia, has accepted a position with The American Fruit Grower, State-Lake Building, Chicago, Illinois, as head of a new department to be known as the Protective League of the American Fruit Grower. It is not stated just what Prof. Marshall's duties will be in his new position. While we regret to see Prof. Marshall leaving his work in Virginia we are certain that the horticultural interests of the country will profit by the new work he is undertaking.

Prof. Close has just returned to the office and reports that Michigan, Illinois and Ohio will add orchard club work just as soon as arrangements can be made, probably some time during the autumn. The orchard club work in Indiana is progressing nicely and has been considerably extended this year. Nothing in the line of fruit extension work meets with so hearty response as the suggestion that fruit club work be started in the various states. Fruit club work is practical, attractive and worthy of consideration in every state where fruit growing is an important industry.